
May & June 2009 North Star

A publication of North Congregational Church, UCC

413-549-0500 Church Office

413-323-0377 Co-Pastors Nada Sellers and Patricia Koons

Web Address: www.north-church.org

Sunday Worship: 10:00 a.m.

An Open and Affirming Congregation

North Congregational Church
North Congregational Church, UCC
PO Box 9613
North Amherst, MA 01059-9613

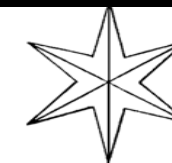
Time Sensitive Material
Please Open Immediately!

North Star

North Church – UCC News

May & June 2009

Unconditionally Welcoming, Decidedly Christian



In Our Thoughts...

The North Church Book Group has just completed a reading of the striking spiritual memoir of Sara Miles called *Take This Bread*. In it, Miles shares the story of her conversion from a hardcore atheist and globe-trotting journalist, to a passionate Christian and the founding Director of the food pantry at St. Gregory's Episcopal Church in San Francisco CA. Nearly 500 people a week are fed at by the pantry which held in St. Gregory's sanctuary, and staffed by pantry clients who volunteer.

During her very first visit to the church, Miles received communion and her life began to change. When asked about this encounter during an interview with Lucky Severson of the newsweekly *Religion & Ethics* (picture below) in May, 2007, Miles explained,

"I think what I discovered in that moment when I put the bread in my mouth and was so blown away by the reality of Jesus was that the requirement for faith turned out not to be believing in a doctrine, or knowing how to behave in a church, or being the right kind of person, or being raised correctly, or repeating the rituals. The requirement for faith seemed to be hunger. It was the hunger that I had always had and the willingness to be fed by something I didn't understand."



Faith hunger is something I think we all experience at some point in our lives; it's something so tangible for Christians at times, so necessary for our well-being, that without it we can starve our faith, and malnourish our relationships with God and others. My hunch is that we search for the chance to be fed in all sorts of ways, and that if we're willing, we can expect to be filled by the manna of the Spirit. It may be in the service of others, or by delving more deeply into God's word; perhaps through a commitment to the disciplines of prayer and worship and yes, the practice of sharing the Lord's Table where we remember Jesus' admonition to eat and to remember until he comes again. Stuff happens in the reign of God, when we are able to be fed in ways we don't fully understand... (continued on next page)

As a congregation, we have the chance to be fed through a newly emerging project called the "Good Eats Club," which is to begin in May (see FYI). In partnership with the Amherst Survival Center (ASC), and our Women Building Bridges regional partnership of UCC churches, ASC will offer leadership for a joint meal preparation club, that brings together ASC clients, church volunteers and ASC staff in order to cook together in our Parish Hall kitchen. We are looking forward to sharing time in the kitchen, learning to get to know one another, and being able to contribute through ingredients, organization, cleaning up and presence. We are also continuing to step out in faith, toward involvement in those places where we can tell others about North Church's commitment to the Jesus way.

If you want to be a part of NCC's next nourishing venture, make sure you come out and share in what promises to feed all of us hungry people.

Pastor Nada

Spiritual Care & Nurture

"... every prayer makes a difference."

- ✦ Please keep all of the students connected to our congregation in your prayers -- those actively involved, those who are the children of members and friends, and our neighbors who are students, as well. Pray that they will feel God's presence as they deal with the stress of end-of-the-year exams and projects.
- ✦ Ask for God to be especially close to those who are grieving.
- ✦ Continue to pray for God's blessing of growth and vitality for North Church.
- ✦ A special prayer for Bob Pollack. The River Shark Café has closed and will not reopen. Pray that all is well with Bob and his family.
- ✦ Please keep the following in your prayers:
The Espinoza family, Margaret Bates, Dottie Jenks, Lucile Sevoian, Norm Clarke, the Giard family, Jeanette Serwa, Julia Evans, Lester Sottile, Felice Yeskel, Schuyler Evans, Neal & Samme, Diane Caracci, the Maslanka family, and the Parent family.

If you have any prayer concerns please contact the Pastors at 413-323-0377 or Ginger Fowler, Ministry Commission Coordinator at 413-658-5654.

FYI

- May 9th** *Tremendous Hearts* Benefit Concert in Arlington, MA from 7PM – 9:30PM
- May 9th** Empty Arms Walk, registration at 2:30pm; program begins at 3pm. Suggested donation: \$10 per person / \$100 per team (park admission is free) Willow Brook Shelter, Look Park, Northampton; to preregister, call: 584-8636 e-mail: jeanmonska@verizon.net; www.emptyarmswesternma.blogspot.com
- May 11th** Executive Meeting at 7:00pm in the Dickinson Room (Parish Hall basement)
- May 13th** Good Eats Club organizational meeting at 6pm in Parish Hall dining room and kitchen – to prepare for kick of joint ASC-NCC cooking club that will begin in our kitchen on **May 16th** at 9am.
- May 16th** Amherst Town Picnic on the Town Common, 11-2 p.m. (Rain date May 17th) We want to have North Church represented and are planning to participate by organizing some children's games. Please contact Steve Brown, 587-0302, to let him know you'll help with this fun and important activity.
- June 7th** Morning worship begins at 10:30am (instead of 10am).
- June 19 – 20** Relay for Life at 3pm at Look Park in Northampton, Luminaria Ceremony at 9pm
- June 26 – 30** UCC General Synod in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Birthdays in May & June

May	13 th – Margaret Bates	June	6 th – Ginger Fowler
	14 th – Nada Sellers		10 th – Malissa Vyce
	17 th – Rebecca Jagla		22 nd – Bill Wiley
	26 th – Rae Westcott		22 nd – Meredith Simpson

We would like to have the birthdays of everyone at North Church, so please reply to nccadmin@crocker.com with yours. Thanks! Lee Steventon

One Great Hour of Sharing

In March, North Church participated in One Great Hour of Sharing, the United Church of Christ response to global need. Your generous donation, a total of \$469.00, will be used to support programs internationally for building sustainable communities, welcoming refugees, and reconstructing lives following disaster. When it seems that times are most difficult and extra funds are hard to come by, NCC members seem to rally around helping our neighbors. Thank you all!

Chris Normandin

Moderator's Report - What Are We Weaving?

Book group ideas. Kitchen cleaning. Sermons. Building Bridges meetings. Bible study discussions. Prayer. Neighborhood walks. The other day I realized that each of these—as well as many other components of North Church life – can be seen as strands. And, I'm so pleased that these strands are beginning to connect with the promise of some new and exciting patterns.

Take cleaning our Parish Hall kitchen. Doesn't sound too inspiring, right? But, somehow the attention to the kitchen became one of the many strands leading to creative thinking about how we at North Church could partner through the Building Bridges project with Amherst Survival Center consumers to make nutritious meals in that very kitchen. You'll read more about these encouraging developments in Pastor Nada's article.

Some of our first efforts to reach out to our neighbors were not as effective as we'd hoped, but practice is necessary, whether in weaving a tapestry or in church outreach! Our partnership with the Amherst Survival Center grows stronger all the time. We're developing relationships with Simple Gifts Farm as well as the North Amherst Library. We're learning more from residents in the apartment complexes around us. We've developed relationships with North Amherst business people and have plans to nurture those. You can read further about some of these plans in the *Celebrate North Amherst* piece.

As I write this, it's the first Sunday after Easter. We celebrate that Christ lives! And, our neighbors – we hope "They will know us as Christians by our love, by our love" as we discover what we can create together.

Barbara Jenkins, Moderator (with thanks to Asaph Murfin for the tapestry image, albeit in a totally different context!)

Workday - Thank You

The April 4th workday was a great success, thanks to all of those who volunteered! The driveway was swept clean of all the sand leftover from winter sanding, the lawn was raked, the grounds were cleared of debris, and seeds were planted for a variety of flowers.

Malissa Vyce

Stewardship and Treasurer's Report

From a total pledged of \$27,460, we have at the end of the first quarter received \$13,895.50, which is 38% of the total. This amount of \$13,895.50 includes one-time gifts totaling \$5,360 given at the beginning of the year and \$5,177 given in weekly or monthly pledges.

Income from loose offerings during this period was \$516.

Income reported for rental of facilities, both by regular tenants and one-time groups was \$2,842.50. The amount from regular tenants is inflated for this quarter because one of our tenants included back rent.

Total income based on pledges, loose offerings and rental of facilities for the first quarter is \$13,885. Income from trust funds was \$8,192 for a total income during the first quarter of \$22,087.

Expenses during the first quarter were \$48,780, so we needed to go to reserves to make up the difference. Expenses during this first quarter were unusually high because \$12,500 paid to us in 2008 by our insurance company for ceiling repairs and painting after the storm was used for operating expenses in 2008. By the time the ceiling work was done in January, 2009, we needed to pay for that out of our own current funds. Also, winter was very costly, both for fuel and with more days than usual requiring ice and snow removal from the sidewalks. Through March, we had spent nearly 60% of the funds from the Grounds Maintenance budget on sidewalk clearing. As with most churches, North Church entered into a preseason agreement for oil, which seemed prudent at the time, but prices did drop after that agreement. We did change propane distributors to take advantages of savings there.

This report was compiled by Mary Jane Laus, Treasurer, Bill Wiley, Assistant Treasurer, and Barbara Jenkins, Stewardship Chairperson.

New Computer for Sound & Projection

After a few weeks and several long nights, the new computer is finally up and running! What does this mean? Well for starters, there will no longer be any of the compatibility issues that we faced when using the MAC. It is Windows based and utilizes Microsoft Office software, which is what most of us are familiar with, thus making the new PC more user friendly, and hopefully not so intimidating. The combination of a new computer and new projector wiring has lead to a more vibrant video graphics color array, which I hope provides a more enjoyable sound and projection experience to all.

Malissa Vyce

Gibbles 'n Bits

West Palm Beach, Fla. – She may be nearly 105, but that won't stop this great-great-great-grandmother from throwing out the first pitch for a Marlins spring training game in April. Maude Newkirk, who turns 105, will throw out a pitch at Roger Dean Stadium for the sixth straight year on April 2.

Mrs. Newkirk, who lives with her granddaughter, credits her longevity to her faith in God. Her family made her stop driving at 90-years-old, but she still loves watching baseball and going to church.

GO GRANNY, GO!!!

Killer Bees



(Daily Hampshire Gazette photo)

Jay Joynes, North Church's Chris Normandin and Rob Hincks of The Killer Bees wait for the next word during the ninth annual Northampton Adult Spelling Bee that raises money for the Northampton Education Foundation and its Small Grants for Teachers program.

Lookin' good, Chris!

Education Express – Alert!

If you think, when you shop at Big Y, that you've been earning points for our adopted Springfield school, Margaret C. Ells elementary, make sure to see whether you are signed up for this academic year. You have to sign up anew each year to begin earning points again.

If you aren't sure, take a look at your receipt the next time you shop. The information is right below the school bus logo.

Celebrate North Amherst



Prouty, Charles, "Paper mill in North Amherst,"
in Digital Amherst, Item #763,
<http://www.digitalamherst.org/items/show/763>

Our Parish Hall will be the site of a special event this coming October as North Church salutes its surrounding neighborhood with an exhibition of historic photos and memorabilia related to the people, schools, businesses and organizations of North Amherst. This exhibit will be part of the 250th anniversary celebration in Amherst, as well as part of North Church's efforts to reach out to the neighborhood surrounding it.

Planning for the event has just begun, but we anticipate having the exhibition open to the public on Sunday afternoons in October, probably from 1-3 pm, with a gala reception, most likely on October 4. Posters inviting people to provide memorabilia as well as copies of photos are ready for distribution, and individuals will also be personally contacted. If you have any items to loan or ideas of people to contact, please let Barbara Jenkins know (253-2929, bbendaj@msn.com) The North Amherst library is helping, and already has found a map and photo to loan. And, Barbara is also looking for North Church members and friends who want to share in the fun of finding treasure and planning the exhibition. We'll also be looking for partners in North Amherst outside of North Church to help us out as we go along.

Also, in the planning stages for fall is a showcase for musical, dramatic and visual artists with ties to North Amherst. Several North Church folks have expressed interest in recruiting for and planning this event, but more are needed, so please speak to Barbara.

We also hope to have some type of event that will bring together businesspeople in North Amherst. The first steps in developing this event are just beginning; we'll have more news to report in the next newsletter.

News from Troop 504

Spring 2009 has been a busy time for 2 boys in **Troop 504** who have been working on their final step toward becoming an Eagle Scout. **Tripp Aquadro** has organized and seen the execution of his project, placing some 50 nesting boxes for wood ducks along the Nowottuck Rail Trail near the Lawrence Swamp. An idea initiated by Cinda Jones, president of W.D. Cows, Tripp worked with scouts in the troop under the leadership of Lyle Denit and Steve Locke and members of Pack 515 under the guidance of Russell Kosuda. Members of the Conservation Commission and the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife joined the effort to make this a most successful adventure.

Niroshan Amarasiriwardena helped to organize the collection of books, writing materials and toys for shipment to Sri Lanka. In the end of March these items were to have been shipped with an estimated arrival time in early May 2009. As with all Eagle projects, this required the hands of at least 17 troop members, as well as 6 adults, helping out on 3 separate occasions between September and December, for the solicitation and collection of these items which then needed to be packaged and made ready for shipment.

Mary Jane Laus
Liaison between the church,
as sponsoring organization, and Troop 504



Drum lessons with Gary Rzab

Gary is a professional drummer who has been teaching for over 20 years. Beginning through advanced students are welcome. Instruction can be on a drum set or hand drums, and lessons are offered in Ashfield or in the basement of our own church's Parish Hall. Call Gary at (413) 634-0274 if interested.

Voice lessons with Eileen Ruby

Are you a choral singer, car crooner, shower chanteuse, or karaoke nut who's been longing for some guidance to give you the confidence to move out into the limelight? Perhaps you're a student, dancer, or actor who keeps almost getting the lead . . . and then ending up in the chorus. Voice lessons with Eileen can help take you where you want to go. Eileen has taught private and group voice at Smith College, Amherst College, and UMass, and she holds master and bachelor degrees in vocal performance from UMass. Eileen teaches in the North Church Parish Hall. Call (413) 774-7969 for more information.

Northampton Pride March & Rally

In Northampton, the first Saturday of May is set aside for the annual Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride March and Rally, for the Pioneer Valley. The Northampton Pride Parade is in its 25th year and going strong. It is the hope that the event will honor the integrity, history and diversity of the Western Massachusetts LGBT community. It is also important in creating a great unity within the LGBT and allied communities.



The people marching from North Church usually meet up at Steve's house in Northampton at 11:30am. Then, they walk over to the parade's starting point, which is just across the street in Lampron Park on Bridge Street, next to the cemetery. The parade kicks off at noon and heads, through downtown on Main Street, to the rally site in the parking lot behind Thorne's Market, next to the parking garage. Parade participants will get to the rally area around 12:45pm, at which time the stage acts will start. There are a mix of artists (rock, pop, and spiritual music), comedy acts, drag contests and much more. There are booths selling a variety of food, clothing, art, and other assortments. The rally will end at approximately 5pm.

North Church has participated in the march the past 3 years. Last year was the first that we were also part of the rally. This year we again have a table at the rally. It is a great way to show our welcoming hands and spirit to those in our surrounding community. Some of our participants march and others help out at the North Church table. There is also some helping ahead of time that is needed, behind the scenes, by labeling the items that the marchers will be throwing out to the crowd. If you are interested in any of those aspects of the March, Rally or preparations please let me know.

Let us show that North Church is an ally of the LGBT community.

Thanks,

Ginger Fowler
gffwhales@msn.com



American Cancer Society - Relay for Life

All of our lives have been impacted by cancer in some way. On June 19-20 North Church will join hundreds of other Pioneer Valley folks in the annual Relay for Life. This overnight event is a major fundraiser for the ACS and helps to raise awareness of cancer prevention, treatment, support programs and the like. Not only that, we have lots of fun. We will have our own tent/table and welcome any and all helpers. If you would like to be part of our planning team, please talk to Chris or Bill to see how you might help.

Ways to Save Energy

As many of you may already know, I'm very passionate about sustainable energy development, as it is the focus of my engineering studies. With that being said, I wanted to let you all know that I am looking into ways to apply sustainability to our church. If anyone has any ideas or suggestions I would love to hear them!

Malissa Vyce

"The Power of Hope" Concert Series

Boston's Premier South African Musical Group
"Matimba ya Ripfumelo" and Tremendous Hearts
Proudly Present:

THE POWER OF HOPE

A benefit concert for AIDS orphans and
vulnerable children in South Africa

To purchase tickets in advance please
visit: www.tremendoushearts.org

All proceeds will be donated to Tremendous Hearts

Saturday, May 9
at 7:00pm at
Pleasant Street
Congregational Church
75 Pleasant St.
Arlington, MA



(in advance)
Adults - \$20
Seniors / Minors - \$10

(at the door)
Adults - \$25
Seniors / Minors - \$15

www.myspace.com/matimbayaripfumelo1

Change in Worship Start Time Planned

Late breaking news: The Worship Group has received overwhelming feedback through its recent Worship Survey, that moving the start of our Sunday worship from 10am to 10:30am would be a welcome change. We will be bringing this decision to the congregation and planning for a 10:30am start beginning in June, 2009. Stay tuned!

Worship Participation – Summer 2009

May	5-3-09	5-10-09	5-17-09	5-24-09	5-31-09
S & P	Bill	Malissa	Sheryl	Ginger	Malissa
Communion	PR & JS				
Reader	Barbara	Steve	Carrie	Barbara	Jenna
Greeters & Offering	Steve & Mary Jane	Carrie & Barbara	Ginger & Chris	Mary Jane & Bill	Patti & Bill
Singers	JE & SS	JE & SS	JE & SS	JE	JE & SS
Flowers	Bill	Carrie	Bill	Mary Jane	Carrie
Refreshments	Mary Jane	Bill	Barbara	Bill	Jenna

If you can help with Worship Participation for June, July & August 2009, please send your availability to nccadmin@crocker.com. Thanks!

Lee Steventon

Newsletter Deadline

The deadline for our July - August Newsletter will be June 15th. Please send all Newsletter submissions to me at nccadmin@crocker.com. I am more than happy to receive anyone's entries any time before the deadline. Let me know that the email is specifically for the Newsletter by putting 'Newsletter' somewhere in the subject line. Thank you! Lee Steventon

This newsletter is produced by NCC with special help from Barbara Jenkins, Bill Wiley and Nada Sellers; layout and final copy by Lee Steventon. Your submissions are welcome, subject to review and possible editing. Questions? Please contact us at nccadmin@crocker.com.